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10. — *Philosophy as Absolute Science.* By E. L. FROTHINGHAM.
Boston: Walker, Wise, & Co. 1864. 8vo. pp. xxii., 453.

THIS is the first volume of a work designed to contain a comprehensive, and, so far as principles go, exhaustive system of Philosophy, in its three great departments of Ontology, Theology, and Psychology, the three being made one, as Spirit, Soul, and Body. The present volume comprises the Ontology; the second portion has, we understand, been a long time in manuscript, and is now preparing for the press; the third portion is not yet completed by the author. The undertaking is one of the boldest that can be conceived by the human mind. In this instance it has been conceived and executed by a new writer, whose name is unknown in literary or in scientific circles, and can be found on no list of academic men. This circumstance, unfortunate as it may be, ought not fatally to prejudice the thinking public against the book; for on every page it bears the strong marks of earnest, patient, vigorous thought, conducted by a clear mind, endowed with much aptitude for philosophical study, exercised in severe processes of reflection, and animated by a very noble, we may even say solemn, intellectual purpose. Moreover, the author has been employed on this work for the last twenty-five years; so that it is the work of a mature lifetime. These facts in themselves make the book interesting as a phenomenon, to say the least. A glance at its table of contents gives a sensation of curiosity, while an examination of its chapters convinces us that we have here a fresh, and on the whole original, statement of the great questions of Being and Existence. No one, not even the metaphysical *blasé*, can fail of getting a mental shock from the pages. They are enough to start the mockers at philosophy to their feet, and cause them to look up expectant.

Mr. Frothingham belongs to no school. He is not Hamiltonian or Kantian; he is neither sensationalist nor transcendentalist; neither theist, atheist, nor pantheist; neither "materialist" nor "spiritualist"; neither Romanist, Protestant, nor Swedenborgian, in the technical sense. He approaches the points under discussion from a new quarter, and occupies towards them an entirely new position. Taking the ground, which he carefully clears and holds, that all philosophy, in all ages and in all departments, has started from a single universal principle, which has led to atheism or to pantheism according as the principle was material or spiritual, and has conducted at last to scepticism and confusion, to the destruction of the individual personality, the disintegration of society, and the obliteration of all mental and moral distinctions, he boldly, at the outset, assumes *two Absolutes; two Uni-*

versal, Spiritual Principles or Causes, constituting opposite spheres of subsistence, mutually exclusive, but working together as the ground and condition of all existence. These principles he defines as *Infinite* and *Finite*, and they stand contrasted with each other as Light with Darkness, Truth with Error, Good with Evil, Life with Death. Neither the Infinite nor the Finite Principle can obtain definite manifestation by itself. The necessity of production draws them together, by a law of attraction which we see exemplified in male and female; the Finite or destructive principle being made subject to the Infinite or vital principle, to the end that life may be incarnated in definite forms. The necessary brevity of our statement forbids an unfolding of the author's full idea. His main point is the positing of two Absolute, Universal, Indefinite, Causing Principles, operative through infinite and finite laws, and co-operative through marriage, whereby the Finite, whose characteristics are *diversity, partiality, and separation*, — guile, hate, destruction in the absolute sphere of Being, falsehood, evil, and deformity in the phenomenal sphere, — is subjected in sacrifice to the Infinite, whose characteristics are *Unity, Universality, and Union*; — in the absolute sphere, Wisdom, Love, Power; in the sphere of phenomena, Truth, Good, and Beauty.

The action and interaction of these two principles, thus repelling and attracting one another, constitutes what we call existence, the definite forms of being in every degree, from God to man, and in every manifestation of both. The assumption of the two principles is the key to Mr. Frothingham's whole system. That removed, the whole is removed; that established, the whole is established. The object of this volume is to construct an ontology on this basis. It is, of course, a basis of *tri-unity*, the reconciliation of two opposites by a third power. The symbol of Trinity is stamped on the whole work. The phrase "Two and two, one against the other," continually lets the key-note fall on the reader's ear, as he passes through the intricate passages of explication. The development of the system is the comprehensive application of this formula.

Mr. Frothingham's system of Philosophy is not calculated to meet with much favor, at present at least, with either the thinkers or the actors. His ideas are too openly and absolutely repugnant to all the popular tendencies in speculation, even to the so-called "conservative" tendencies, resting as these do on premises which he repudiates; and his practical social ethics will be vehemently, and in some quarters scornfully, opposed by the masses and their leaders. Had he the skillful writer's mastery of the literary art, a copious vocabulary, a graceful diction, talent for manipulating and arranging his material, power to

state his thoughts simply and illustrate them attractively, his book might cause a profound sensation throughout the more intelligent portion of the reading community. As it is, it will only succeed in gaining the attention of the thoughtful, conscientious few, who will not shrink from its rather hard and abstruse style. It ought, however, to command the attention of these. It deserves to be carefully read and deeply pondered; for it is a well-considered and powerful attempt to reinstate Philosophy on its ancient spiritual throne, and restore to it its supremacy over the minds and the lives of men.

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11. — *America and her Commentators. With a Critical Sketch of Travel in the United States.* By HENRY T. TUCKERMAN. New York: Charles Scribner. 1864. 8vo. pp. viii., 460.

Two centuries ago this volume would have borne the title, "America's Looking-Glasse, wherein she may behold her trew Image livelie projected." Here something like the wish of Burns is accomplished; and if we are not exactly permitted to see ourselves as others see us, we have at least the privilege of finding out how they wish us to be seen. It is very natural, perhaps, to be interested in what other people think of us, but we are not so sure that it is always very desirable. If we contrive to *be* something, we can afford to be perfectly easy as to what conclusion the world will come to about us, and one of the main impediments to our becoming our natural selves is that uneasy consciousness which is as great a fault in national as in individual character. So soon as we are really great, one of its first symptoms will be the ceasing to be jealous of our greatness on all occasions. It is only quackery that advertises in capitals and needs certificates a column long. We have generally found the purest, and in many respects the best, types of Americanism among backwoodsmen, who knew nothing, and, if they had, would have cared nothing, about European criticism. When America becomes what she ought to be, and what she will be when this war ends in the triumph of her vital principle, her opinion will be of vastly more consequence to the Old World than that of the Old World to her. As for comments upon our conventional solecisms by men who come here without ever having seen good society at home, and go away without having been admitted to it here, they do not greatly disturb us. What *does* disturb us rather is the sensitiveness to such things, which shows that there are those among us who would be glad to import the social trumpery which it was our greatest blessing to have left behind us in crossing the sea. "Manners maketh man,"